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STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

MILITARY WOMEN: THEIR FUTURE ROLES IN COMBAT

BY

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by

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> U.S. Army War College CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

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ABSTRACT

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As plans are prepared for military forces of the twenty-first century, the United States continues to populate its principal fighting forces with men, thereby limiting utilization of talented female personnel and narrowing its service pool. This study reviews the recent history of women's roles, both military and civilian, and identifies current U.S. Army specialties available to men only. Justifications for continued exclusion of women are analyzed. More equitable means of selecting both male and female personnel for combat roles are recommended.

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MILITARY WOMEN: THEIR FUTURE ROLES IN COMBAT

The second half of the twentieth century gave rise to expanding roles for women, both in the civilian and in the military spheres. Although women currently experience near-total access to roles and positions in the civilian world and although opportunities in the armed forces have significantly increased, women are still excluded from combat roles and from other specialties when located in conjunction with combat organizations.

Persuasive arguments to remove the exclusions have surfaced. Yet the exclusions persist.

To date, forces of resistance have prevailed. Can—will—they continue to dominate? Should women be excluded from combat roles?

This study revisits the question of women in combat. It reviews numbers and skills relating to military employment of women. It analyzes rationale for excluding women from combat roles. It compares the opportunities of women soldiers with those of their civilian counterparts. Finally, it recommends changes of policy.

Those recommendations provide focus for the entire paper. The concept of the battlefield of the future is changing. Asymmetrical warfare is expected to replace fixed formations. The front line will be hypothetical rather than actual. All participants will be exposed to the dangers of combat. The Communications Zone will not insulate its inhabitants from the dangers of conflict. In order to provide the best-prepared force to succeed in the military actions of the coming decades, the nation needs to secure, train, and retain personnel who are superbly qualified. By opening all specialties to women, the pool of potential warfighters doubles.

Moreover, before admitting anyone into specified critical positions, the military community must identify and quantify those physical and psychological characteristics inherent in performing required duties. By testing personnel—men as well as women--before providing

advanced training and by selecting those who demonstrate potential to succeed, the armed forces enhances the capacity to prevail when the unthinkable occurs.

Current members of the armed forces must be reeducated, too. Existing stereotypes and paradigms that recognize only male warfighters must change. The services have extensive experience in re-acclimating its members to accept and implement new ways of thinking. In the past, attitudes were positively adjusted in relevant aspects of equal opportunity, discrimination, and human relations. More recently, the topic of sexual harassment was briefed to every soldier in the Army. The time has come to fully accept women and to maximize their skills in support of the goals and objectives of the military and the country.

INCREASING ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE U.S. ARMED FORCES

Although history records women's participation in military actions throughout the ages, their participation in the United States military has witnessed a dramatic growth since World War II. Directly related to the international conflict in the 1940s, women's services were formalized and recognized. Among them were:

Women's Army Corps (WACs)

Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service—in the U.S. Navy
(WAVES)

Women in the Air Force (WAFs)

Women Air Service Pilots (WASPs)

Women's Service in the U. S. Coast Guard (SPARS)

In most cases, women of their time performed functions perceived as appropriate to their gender, mostly administrative and medical duties. The notable exceptions involved women pilots and mechanics.

Sweeping increases in women's military participation began in the 1970s. At the start of that decade, women comprised less than two percent of active duty forces. As service members, they were restricted to "safe" positions—those authorized by the Direct Combat Probability Code (DCPD). However, startling changes emerged as the decade progressed. In school year 1972-1973, the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) opened to women on a test basis. In 1975, Congress approved enrollment of women in service academies. The first female cadets arrived in 1976. The Women's Officer Candidate School (OCS) at Fort McClellan also closed in 1976 as women integrated into the Branch Immaterial Officer Candidate Course at Fort Benning. In 1978, the Women's Army Corps ceased to exist and WACs became members of the Total Army.

In 1991, the DCPD was rescinded and the Department of Defense established new guidelines governing the assignment of female soldiers: "Women cannot be assigned to units that engage in direct ground combat, units that colocate with ground combat units, units in which the physical demands are too hard for most women and to certain ships and submarines, if the cost of creating special berthing areas is prohibitive." Thus, although still restricted, women's roles expanded beyond the traditional medical and administrative functions common one-half century earlier.

Currently, at the end of the twentieth century, women constitute over fourteen percent of active duty forces.⁴ Among Reserve Components, women represent a greater proportion.

Depending upon the service, the percentage of women members compared with men ranks in the

upper teens and twenties.⁵ The Army Reserve leads in the percentage of women in service: twenty-five percent of the force is female and the number is growing. Thirty-six percent of new soldiers who enlisted in 1998 were women (a reduction from thirty-nine percent in 1997).⁶

Women are now eligible for over ninety percent of career fields available in the Armed Services of the United States. However, the percentage of actual positions open to women varies significantly by service.

As noted in Table 1, the Army and Marine Corps restrict soldiers and marines to twothirds of the slots in the inventory. Naval women are eligible for 94 percent of available positions, while those serving in the Air Force and Coast Guard have near total access.

MILITARY CAREER FIELDS/POSITIONS AVAILABLE TO WOMEN

	Percent Career	Percent Positions Available	
Component	Fields Available		
Army	91%	67%	
Navy	96%	94%	
Marine Corps	93%	67%	
Air Force	99%	99%	
Coast Guard	100%	98%	

Table 1 ⁷: MILITARY CAREER FIELDS/POSITIONS AVAILABLE TO WOMEN

Specific Army specialties which exclude women are depicted in Table 2. Exclusions pertain to particular areas within Career Management Fields (CMF). For example, Special Forces and Armor are completely closed to women; only men may serve in any capacity—officer (commissioned or warrant) or enlisted. Conversely, no prohibitions against women exist in other fields, such as the traditional administrative and medical branches and functional areas. Less traditional specialties are similarly nonexclusionary; for instance, transportation, military police, and military intelligence are available to all. Other CMFs are mixed, allowing women

ARMY SPECIALTIES WHICH EXCLUDE WOMEN

Career Management Field	Enlisted	Commissioned Officer	Warrant Officer
Infantry	Infantryman	Infantry	Officer
manuy	Indirect Fire	Intantity	
	Infantryman		
	Fighting Vehicle		
	Infantryman		
	Infantry Senior SGT		
Combat Engineering			
Combat Engineering	Combat Engineer		
Field Artillery	Cannon Crewmember		
	Tactical Automated		
	Fire Control Systems		
	Specialist		
	Field Artillery Tactical		
	Data Systems Specialist		
	Cannon Fire Direction		
	Specialist		
	Fire Support Spec		
	Multiple Launch Rocket		
	System Crewmember		
	Multiple Launch Rocket		
	System Operations/Fire		
	Direction Specialist		
	Field Artillery Firefinder		
	Radar Op		
Air Defense Artillery	Air Defense C4I Tactical	Short Range Air Defense	FAAD Systems Technician
	Operations Center	(SHORAD) Artillery	(RC)
	Enhanced		
	Operator/Maintainer		
	Bradley Linebacker		
	Crewmember		
	Avenger Crewmember		
Special Forces (SF)	SF Weapons SGT	Special Forces	SF Warrant Officer
	SF Engineer SGT		
	SF Medical SGT		
	SF Communications SGT		
	SF Assistant Operations		
	and Intelligence SGT		
	SF Senior SGT		
Armor	Cavalry Scout	Armor, General	
	M1 Armor Crewman	Armor	
	Armor Senior SGT	Cavalry	
Mechanical Maintenance	Self-Propelled Field		
Tracentalization (Videncelance	Artillery Turret Mechanic		
	M1 Abrams Tank Turret	-	
	Mechanic		
	Bradley Fighting Vehicle	-	
	System Turret Mechanic		
	M1 Abrams Tank System		
	Mechanic Mechanic		
	M60A1/A3 Tank System	 	<u> </u>
	Mechanic (RC)		
	Wicelianic (ICC)		
	Bradley Fighting Vehicle		

Table 2 8: ARMY SPECIALTIES WHICH EXCLUDE WOMEN

to perform duties in certain of the career specialties, while denying them entry to others. This latter group includes air defense artillery and the supply and services/quartermaster (enlisted/officer) areas. Despite the combat-related prohibitions, women may also serve in fields which would probably place them in hostile zones during a conflict, such as ammunition/ordnance (enlisted/officer) operations, chemical corps, and all engineering specialties.

In describing women's contributions to the Army, General Dennis Reimer, Army Chief of Staff, recently (2 October 1998) stated that:

They bring a tremendous strength to the Army. I don't think that we could have the quality Army we have right now [without women]. As you look at the quality indicators that we monitor in terms of high schools diplomas and mental categories, females are usually higher than some of the males. And I think that's a great strength."

Despite this regard for women in the armed forces, despite the growing numbers of women in the military, and despite the history of service women, exclusions from particular military careers persist, notably those regarded as clearly combat-oriented.

RATIONALE FOR WOMEN'S EXCLUSION FROM COMBAT

Resistance toward inclusion of women in combat specialties falls into the following categories:

- 1. Insufficient physical strength to perform rigorous combat duties.
- Lack of emotional characteristics to handle battlefield stress, such as a "stomach" for violence.
- 3. Interference with male bonding and unit cohesion; opportunity for increased sexual harassment and fraternization.
- 4. Financial costs associated with modifications necessary for privacy.

- 5. Public reluctance to see women taken prisoner or killed in action.
- 6. National reticence to draft or involuntarily assign women to combat roles. ¹⁰ Each of these arguments is addressed below.

PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE

Physiological studies have repeatedly demonstrated that gender differences occur.

Women show greater facility in some skills; men excel at others. Depending upon the task, women may display greater agility, while men perform better on measures of upper body strength. Men throw objects more accurately, but women follow multiple trains of thought more effectively. While such differences exist, their relationship to performance of combat duties is unclear because standards for job competence have neither been developed nor applied to personnel entering combat specialties. In fact, "according to the Office of the Secretary of Defense official responsible for overseeing the fitness program, physical fitness standards…are not directly related to job performance."

Following their entry level physical examinations, enlistees are assigned a physical profile rating which is a criterion for assigning them to given military career fields. To qualify for combat positions, they must have a "perfect" profile. "Among enlisted soldiers who entered the Army between 1987 and 1991..., an equal proportion of men and women (73 percent) possessed a perfect profile. Under current standards, they would be considered physically qualified for infantry training." However, under existing regulations, only male candidates were accepted.

Studies conducted in both the United States and the United Kingdom monitored a regimen of physical training and testing of women. Endurance and strength were measured.

Both determined that initial female deficiencies in physical performance can be overcome. In

the U. S. study, women improved more than thirty-three percent following a program of running with 75-pound rucksack and strength training (squats with 100-pound barbell). In the U. K., researchers concluded that women could develop the same levels of physical fitness of similarly sized/built men. ¹³

Such evidence indicates that women can markedly enhance their physical strength and endurance. Nevertheless, physical requirements for combat positions have not yet been documented in order to determine with precision which military personnel should be assigned to such career fields.

EMOTIONAL ATTRIBUTES

Consideration of gender roles in combat situations abounds with stereotypical notions of male and female orientations. Men are widely perceived as aggressive, action-oriented, bold, and hardened to the bloody requirements of war. Women are more often expected to be passive, verbal, gentle, and squeamish. According to such stereotyped views, men's willingness to fight would be undermined by their chivalric tendencies to protect women combatants.

However, such beliefs are contradicted by women's successful performances in formerly male-exclusive civilian occupations. Women now perform well as firefighters, paramedics, law enforcement officers, and comparable jobs. Moreover, women's participation in military operations has proven their capacity to function successfully in hostile situations. Notably, the largest number of women ever deployed (more than 40,000) served in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm in 1990 – 1991. Although no relevant statistical evidence was gathered and analyzed, Martin Binkin reports that "many women were exposed to the arduous field conditions critics contended they would be unable to handle. There was little to indicate, however, that women were any less able than men to cope."

Civilian population groups also encounter stress comparable to that experienced by military personnel. Research in this area reveals little significant difference between men and women. Salient results include the following:

1. Acute stress is an inherent feature of competitive athletics. A 1998 survey of 477 sports competitors (288 men and 189 women) examined coping strategies related to stressful events. Seven stressors were identified and studied:

Making errors (physical and mental)

Receiving criticism from coach/authority

Observing opponent's cheating

Responding to intense pain/injury

Getting erroneous call or penalty

Reacting to opponent's success

Erring due to weather/field conditions¹⁵

Results revealed individual differences and situational uniqueness. In regard to gender distinctions, "...male and female athletes exhibited far more similarities than differences in their coping patterns. This finding supports the contention that female athletes, particularly at elite levels, possess similar psychological characteristics to their male counterparts." ¹⁶

2. The impact of stress under politically volatile circumstances was studied in 1996 in Israel. Psychotherapists who live and treat patients in the West Bank were investigated using "hardiness" (commitment, control, and challenge) questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The findings showed "...there were no differences between genders on the level of hardiness in specific stressful situations, and both genders were using problem-focused and emotion-focused

strategies....the findings which related to the gender differences were surprising, since gender differences hardly seemed to exist...."¹⁷

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

The charge that women will disrupt male bonding and unit cohesion was also undermined in the Persian Gulf War. Anecdotal evidence shows that men and women underwent the same experiences, suffered the same horrendous conditions, and earned mutual respect for each other. 18

Similarly, some critics have contended that that combat service would heighten sexual misconduct and would lead to harassment and fraternization. In fact,

Studies show that gender-integrated combat units are as effective as all-male units, and that members of gender-integrated units develop brother-sister bonds rather than sexual ones....Experience has shown that actual integration diminishes prejudice and fosters group cohesiveness more effectively than any other factor. ¹⁹

None of the services currently conduct tests to determine service members' emotional or interpersonal traits in order to identify psychologically fit combat personnel. Such information would be useful prior to assigning service members to specific military specialties.

MODIFICATION EXPENSES

Those who oppose the inclusion of women in combat roles often claim that the costs of revamping, remodeling, and devising accommodations and equipment for females would be prohibitive. Experience has provided little validity to this fiscal argument. All services have designed living quarters and work facilities to accommodate privacy needs for personal hygiene and sanitation. In cases where separate bathing/latrine areas are not practicable, simple signs have been used to maintain personal distance.

Civilian examples can also be cited, from single bathrooms provided in small businesses to the complexities of coeducational dormitories. Again, the Gulf War demonstrated that consideration and ingenuity can accommodate differing needs. Despite crude conditions, arrangements were made in the field to protect soldiers' privacy. Rather than massive construction projects, development of mutual respect serves to resolve anticipated problems.

Certain items of combat equipment would undoubtedly require modification for optimum use by women's generally smaller frames. However, some of this kind of modification has the potential to improve effectiveness overall. For instance, as a result of female testing of the Army's new backpack, the Modular Lightweight Load Carrying Equipment (MOLLE), researchers decided to slightly reduce the size of the pack and frame. The smaller package is expected to result in fewer injuries for all soldiers.²⁰

No firm figures have been found to ascertain how much equipment would require modification. So the actual costs of such changes cannot currently be determined. But the MOLLE example indicates that retooling is likely to benefit both men and women.

PUBLIC PERCEPTION

Opinion polls of both civilian and military personnel show steadily increasing support for women in combat. Public acceptance rose from twenty-two percent in 1980 to seventy-two percent in 1992. Among women officers, the approval rate is even higher. Certainly, unanimous support does not exist. Opposition to women combatants is apparent with regard to deploying women with children. However, the growth of equal opportunity in the civilian work world and the success achieved by women workers in the public sector contribute to the trend toward positive civilian attitudes toward women serving in combat roles.

A further question—yet to be fully explored—asks if the Constitution and laws of the country support excluding women from equal access to all available positions in the armed forces. Discrimination has been struck down in virtually all civilian fields of endeavor, while the military services are still permitted to employ restrictions. The courts and Congress will probably be called upon to resolve this question unless the services, with the consent of the legislature, voluntarily revise military regulations. However, the real sticking point may be the issue of women and the draft.

DRAFTING WOMEN

American men have historically been required to register for the draft with the Selective Service System when they reached their eighteenth birthday. Traditionally, women were exempt from the draft on the basis that, should they be drafted, they could not serve in combat positions.

Is the draft actually intended to induct personnel for combat roles? Statistics do not support this belief.

Most men drafted in the nearly two decades following World War II saw no combat service, nor were they even nominally assigned to combat roles....serving as clerks, drivers, radio operators, dental technicians, personnel specialists, and in other general support skill areas of a modern military organization.

Moreover, over 70 percent of the men drafted into the Army during a wartime draft were not assigned to combat positions....Even in 1967, at the height of the U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia, only about half the annual draftees were serving in Vietnam, and over half of those were in noncombat roles.²³

The real object of the draft is to fill the force with qualified personnel to perform necessary roles—whether in combat or noncombat positions. Presumably, if women were authorized to serve in combat and combat-colocated Career Management Fields, the issue of drafting women would be obviated.

In fact, in the event of national mobilization, drafting women would strengthen the U.S. military response. The number of prospective inductees would double; the skill level would

increase due to previous training, education, and experience in needed service areas (professional, technical, administration, etc.).

Even more probable than large-scale conscription is the scenario that projects insufficient time to implement a draft. According to Secretary of the Army Louis Caldera, "Our country's not going to have the luxury of trying to (quickly) draft and train forces in the future. We're either going to be prepared to fight and suffer low casualties, or we're going to be unprepared and suffer great casualties."²⁴ This current strategy dictates that personnel must be trained and qualified before disaster strikes. If women are to serve effectively, they must be prepared for all eventualities—including combat.

From this perspective, there are more pressing questions than whether women should go into combat: Is it discriminatory, perhaps unconstitutional, to force involuntary service on men alone? Is it legitimate to overlook a large segment of the population in securing people to perform necessary military specialties? Have the old perceptions for excluding women changed? Is it incumbent upon women, as well as men, to defend their country in times of crisis? Ultimately, judicial and legislative actions will provide answers. At this time, what is apparent is that increased numbers of women are serving in the military, that they are serving in an increasing number of roles, and that the American public is increasingly accepting the notion of American women bearing arms (as well as children!).

COMBAT SKILLS

According to U.S. Army Field Manual <u>Combat Skills of the Soldier</u> (FM 21-75), U.S. soldiers must be trained in the following areas:

Cover, Concealment, Camouflage Observation

Fighting Positions Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Warfare

Movement Combat Intelligence and Counterintelligence

The appendices further amplify combat proficiencies by addressing:

Mines Survival, Evasion, and Escape

Demolitions Weapons and Fire Control

Obstacles Field Expedient Antiarmor Devices

Urban Areas Range Cards

Tracking

The manual states "This is the soldier's field manual. It tells the soldier how to perform the combat skills needed to survive on the battlefield. These are basic skills that must be learned by soldiers in all military occupational specialties (MOS)."²⁵ Thus, regardless of the exclusions facing women, they are required to learn combat skills as part of their basic training. These are the same skills employed by infantrymen—a specialty denied to women.

Without authorization to qualify in combat positions, women are unable to participate in advanced training, exercises, simulations, experiments, and wargames which promote combat proficiency and excellence. According to General Gordon R. Sullivan, retired U.S. Army Chief of Staff, "Only during training are soldiers, equipment, leaders, a blend of forces and doctrine all combined just as they are in combat."²⁶

The reality of modern warfare posits a fluid, nonlinear battlefield and exposes all participants to hazardous duty. Direct combat is no longer restricted to prescribed areas; there is no safety zone to "protect the women folks." Prohibitions against women serving in designated combat roles in effect prevents them from gaining higher level capabilities though training and

experience. Ultimately, the prohibition detracts from the best interests of the nation in pursuing military objectives and places women in peril in the environment of modern warfare.

Because women are restricted from obtaining combat specialties, they are further restrained from achieving leadership roles in designated career fields. Combat leadership traits have been identified in various ways. Among the usually cited capabilities are: integrity, selflessness, competence, courage, loyalty, innovation, vision, direction, and a sense of mission.²⁷ None of these skills is inherently male. All are developed through education and training over a long period of time. As General Dennis Reimer, current Army Chief of Staff, stated: "It takes us 20 years to grow a division commander. That's absolutely right. So if you want somebody as a leader who can be a division commander in 2020, and you want them with the difference skill sets, you've got to start right about now in order to develop them because that's how long it's going to take."²⁸

When women are denied combat positions, they are also denied access to the process that leads to leadership positions. Furthermore, they are denied opportunities to compete for the highest military slots, for promotion to top ranks, and for placement to participate in the most critical national military decisions. "We must make sure the professors of military science teach that most opportunity for advancement in the military comes from the combat branch....Combat arms officers represent the future of the Army. The chief of staff of the Army is always from combat arms."²⁹

Although women have had little opportunity to demonstrate their effectiveness in U.S. military situations requiring combat skills and leadership, they have increasingly proven their capacity to excel in comparable environments. In fact, experience in other arenas has shown that women are capable of succeeding in any field of endeavor.

WOMEN'S WORK

During World War II, while substantial numbers of American men were deployed in support of the war, women experienced a great surge in employment. Although no listing is complete, Table 3 provides examples of jobs performed by women who had newly arrived in the in the civilian wartime workforce. Since that time, further expansion of "women's work" is evident—both in civilian and military spheres.

The world of law enforcement closely parallels the military in its reception and treatment of women. A summary of key developments follows.

POLICE WORK

Law enforcement agencies, when confronted with the possibilities of women in the ranks, often exhibited the same sort of resistance seen in the military, particularly in raising the issue of physical strength and emotional toughness. Other arguments cited women's tolerance of stress, their potential for more injuries, and their need for "protection". So, when women were originally accepted into police forces in the United States over one hundred years ago, they were given work that was significantly different from that of their male colleagues. Women dealt with cases involving women and children; they were expected to concern themselves with social welfare; they did not have the power to arrest suspects. Different regulations applied to men and women police officers. Women had to comply with more stringent rules; they received lower salaries; they had little opportunity to compete for better positions. Court cases were required to grant women a measure of equity. Stereotypes of "weak women" contributed to continued inequality.

EXAMPLES OF CIVILIAN JOBS HELD BY WOMEN DURING WWII

Aerodynamic engineerElectricianPhysicistArchitectEngine OperatorPipefitterAstronomerFiremanPostman

Attorney Flagpole painter Radio engineer

Baggageman Flame cutter Railroad track tender

Barber Flame burner Riveter
Billet operation helper Flash welder Scaler
Blacksmith helper Forest fire fighter Scientist

Bus driver Foundry helper Shell assembler

Butcher Furnace operator Shipper

Cargo loader Garbage collector Slaughterhouse workers

Checker Geologist (brain picker,

Checker (commerical airlines) Grinder stomach scrubber,

Chemist Inspector belly grader,

Chipper Junk sorter sweetbread puller,

Cleaning/maintenance worker Keel welder vein pumper)

Coil taper Laborer Steam hammer operator

ConductorLumberjackStreet cleanerConsultantMathematicianSupervisorCore makerMechanicSurveyorCrane operatorMessengerTaxi driver

Crossing flagman Metallurgical observer Telegraph operator

Draftsman Meteorologist Ticket taker
Draw bench operator Milkman Tinsmith

Drawbridge tender Motorman Tool machinist

Driver Oiler Traffic cop

Electrical engineer Ordnance worker Welder

Electrical helper Packer Whistle punk (logging camp)

Table 3: EXAMPLES OF CIVILIAN JOBS HELD BY WOMEN DURING WWII 30

However, appropriate physical training programs enabled women to develop additional physical strength, particularly upper body strength. Eventually, substantial integration was achieved and accepted. Notable benefits emerged. For instance, women used less force and were more effective in diffusing hostile situations. They used verbal methods, rather than hostile or brutal physical force. As a result, their techniques are now taught to male officers as well. Women are also credited with bringing a public service-oriented tone to departments, with greater emphasis on "people skills" than on aggression. ³¹

OTHER OCCUPATIONS

Many of the skills inherent in the Army specialties which exclude women are also required in civilian occupations. Women successfully occupy positions in which military counterpart abilities are needed. Thus, the modern workforce finds women employed as firefighters; paramedics; heavy equipment operators, drivers, mechanics; scientists of all stripes; astronauts and support staff; disaster relief workers; bomb diffusers; weapons instructors; and other hazardous, physically demanding occupations. In short, the military appears to be the last holdout in providing women full access to the total range of specialties in the organization.

CONCLUSIONS

The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie—deliberate, contrived and dishonest—but the myth—persistent, persuasive and unrealistic.

John F. Kennedy, Yale University, 1962

The last sixty years witnessed dramatic increases of women in service to the armed forces, accompanied by gradual increases in the numbers and kinds of positions they are now

authorized to fill. Currently, women are excluded from military specialties categorized as direct ground combat—or colocated with direct ground combat units, as well as from units in which physical demands may be "too hard" and from naval vessels if costs of special berths are too high. The Army slots women into ninety percent of its career fields, but sixty-seven percent of actual positions. Women currently constitute nearly fifteen percent of the Army's active forces and over twenty-five percent of the Army Reserve. Their numbers are growing. With sharply increased use of Reserve Components, more and more women will be projected into future military missions.

Reasons for excluding women appear to be based more on stereotypical beliefs and perceptions than on reality. The only valid argument is that most men possess more of certain kinds of physical strength than most women do. However, as women become more athletically oriented, relative differences are diminishing. Studies show that training programs can overcome a large degree of this disparity. Moreover, as demonstrated in police work, alternative approaches may be more effective in addressing particular situations.

Although the strongest argument against greater integration of women in armed services relates to physical readiness, the military has *not* developed tests to determine precisely who meets fitness standards related to combat specialties. In fact, clear, consistent standards for performance of combat duties do not exist.

Skills identified as combat necessities are trained in basic training for all military specialties. Both men and women who enter the armed forces must complete this training. However, since women are not allowed to pursue combat specialties, they cannot participate in the subsequent activities, training, and experiential development essential to progress as leaders and toward the highest ranks. Consequently, the nation does not allow women equal access to

the military profession. Nor does the nation benefit from full utilization of its personnel. In addition, because of current nonlinear methods of conducting military operations, women will be as exposed as men in future conflicts. Thus, they are at a disadvantage without advanced training in combat arts.

The United States has successfully integrated women into civilian occupations and professions, including those formerly considered belonging to a "man's world". The Armed forces need to do the same.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to make full use of military personnel to best achieve national objectives, the armed forces must ensure that the most qualified, ablest individuals are assigned to critical roles, are fully trained and equipped, and have the experience necessary to succeed in combat situations. In times of crisis, the United States needs nothing less than the finest; gender should not be an issue. To rectify the situation, I offer the following recommendations:

- 1. Quantify combat skills. Exactly how much strength and what kinds of strength do combat soldiers need? What physical abilities must a soldier have to accurately and efficiently complete each combat task? If there are psychological/emotional characteristics required to effectively discharge each combat duty, specify them. Provide clear descriptions of skill requirements.
- 2. Develop standardized tests to determine best-qualified personnel. Based on the quantification of combat skills, match personnel with the greatest potential to succeed with the military specialties requiring their talents.

- 3. Eliminate gender as a criterion. Acknowledge that not all men are outstanding warriors and that some women are. Before assigning soldiers a military specialty, assure they have the aptitude for appropriate skill development. Potential is important; gender is not.
- 4. Provide advanced physical fitness training for those entering combat specialties.

 Research shows that significant increases in physical strength and fitness can be achieved through training. All marginal personnel, with opportunity to improve, offer added value to the military.
- 5. "Market" revised attitude to existing personnel. Military culture holds deeply ingrained attitudes about women's roles and capabilities. Now is the time to begin increasing cultural receptivity to women in all military roles.

A strong military relies on the commitment of all of its personnel and an optimal use of the talents of individuals. The United States can multiply its personnel resources by assuring equal access, training, and utilization of all of its armed forces. Increasingly, this includes significant numbers of women.

WORD COUNT = 5144

ENDNOTES

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- ² Department of the Army, <u>Army Personnel Newsletter</u>, December 1978, No. 12-78, pp. 5-6.
- ³ Lisa Daniel, "Some Combat Jobs Open to Women," <u>Army Times</u>, 9 November 1998, p. 10.
 - ⁴ General Accounting Office, <u>Gender Issues</u>, p. 12.
- ⁵ Reserve Forces Policy Board, <u>Reserve Component Programs</u> (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, March 1998), p. 64.
 - ⁶ Ibid., p. 63.
- ⁷ Jane McHugh, "Fewer Females are Joining Reserves," <u>Army Times</u>, 8 February 1999, p. 19.
- ⁸ "Transitions Enlisted Specialties, Commissioned Officer Specialties, Warrant Officer Specialties," <u>Army Times</u>, 16 November 1998, 32ff.
- ⁹ Reimer, Dennis J., "Military Challenges of the 21st Century," presentation transcript, National Press Club (Federal News Service), Washington, D.C., 2 October 1998, p. 7.
- ¹⁰ Martin Binkin, Who Will Fight the Next War? (Washington, D.C.: St. Martin's Press, 1993), p. 15.
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- ¹³ J. Michael Brower, "Undermining Old Taboos: US, UK Studies Say Women Can Meet Physical Demands of Combat," <u>Armed Forces Journal</u>, May 1996, p. 13.
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